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Session Two Structured Reading Response

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Using SQ3R Technique in Reading Chapters 1 and 2

Following scanning chapters 1 and 2 of *Program Evaluation : Alternative Approaches and* *Practice Guidelines* by Fritzpatrick J., Sanders, J, and Worthen, B., the following questions arose for me:

1. Has the definition of evaluation changed over time? If so, what factors contributed to this change?
2. Are there situations where informal evaluation is viewed as less valuable than formal evaluation?
3. What criteria are applied to an evaluation to deem it as a “basic” type of evaluation?
4. How important is evaluation in today’s world?
5. What factors contributed to the changes made in evaluation methods?
6. Where did evaluation begin?
7. How did evaluation evolve our time?
8. What were the biggest influences on evaluation?
9. How are evaluators prepared for their diverse role?

Following reading the chapters intensively, I learned evaluation has changed over time and one of the reasons for the change in definition can be attributed to multidisciplinary approach which is now used in evaluation and the clear differentiation between research and education. When I pondered on the question of the value of formal versus informal evaluation, I deduced all evaluation, formal and informal is equally valuable. I enjoyed the definition of evaluation given by Mark, Henry and Jules in 1999 (as cited in Fitzpatrick, Sanders, Worthen, 2008) stating evaluation “ as a form of sense making.” ( p. 9).

Basic types of evaluation are considered formative and summative . According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen (2008), formative and summative evaluation have different audiences and different purposes. They feel formative evaluation is used for program improvement, while summative evaluation is used to make decisions about the program such as whether to discontinue or expand the program.

Evaluation has become extremely important in today’s world as the need for accountability has become more critical.

A number of factors contributed to the changes which were made to evaluation processes over the years. Evaluation practices impacted on and were impacted by changes in politics, added funding available to agencies and institutions, need for accountability and changes in technology and business. One of the first evaluation projects in the public sector, as noted by Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen occurred when the Chinese officials in 2000 B. C. conducted civil service exams to measure how proficient the applicants were. Some of the biggest influences on the practice of evaluation include the need for accountability for the funding agencies and changes in the society. According to Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*  of 1965 was the event most responsible for the development of contemporary program evaluation. Prior to the 1960’s most evaluation was based on existing methods for research. As the quest for accountability grew, so too did the need to have greater capacity and ability as an evaluator. From this need, grew more interest in the area of evaluation. Theory was developed by a number of authors known for their work in evaluation. Evaluation became viewed as multidisciplinary, going beyond the realm of social science and is now recognized as a profession. There are a variety of programs available for those who are interesting in gaining expertise in evaluation. Evaluation has become a practice which has its own practice standards and professional association. Regular meetings are held to keep the membership informed and engage evaluation specialists from across the world in ongoing dialogue. As a result of technological advancements, there are many more tools available for evaluators to use. This area saw tremendous growth since the 1960’s. One of my personal areas of interest in evaluation is the qualitative aspect.

Responses to Chapters 1 and 2

The beginning chapters of Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen’s book provide me with an opportunity to reflect on my past workplaces where I was asked to conduct evaluations. I recall feeling inadequate and unprepared for the challenge. Knowing the history of evaluation and also the number of influences which have impacted on the practice of evaluation provide me with a sense of satisfaction that I, like many others who embark on a maiden voyage of evaluation, seem like sailors on a sea without a lighthouse. The information I gained from these chapters tells me that the process of evaluation is relatively new as a formal practice; that evaluation is viewed as multi-disciplinary and must be so in order to meet the demands. I ponder on the differentiation between research and evaluation and think of how research has impacted on my practice as a nurse. In the course I am presently teaching I tell the students of the times when alcohol was administered intravenously to stop pre-term labor and point out how the research and credible evaluation methods used are able to show how harmful this practice was for the fetus.

My current practice, being a registered nurse, is one very immersed in the practice of evaluation on an ongoing basis. My task is to equip students to develop expertise in the assessment and ongoing care of the patients they serve. I need to engage students in order to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities to perform as a safe, practicing nurse. Inherent in the practice of nursing is the self reflection and the ability of nurses to recognize the standards and be able to evaluate their performance and also the performance of those around them as well as be able to evaluate their patient’s conditions. Based on the readings, it has been affirmed to me that many disciplines voices and opinions are needed in order to make judgments about patient care.

The readings from Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen’s book advance my abilities by increasing my knowledge base of what summative and formative evaluations include. This information helps me to question processes which I am currently involved in and whether there has been attention paid to formative evaluation. In my past experience, the majority of evaluations I have been involved with have been summative more than formative in nature. I now feel more confident to question the processes used by evaluators. I regularly ask my students for feedback on my teaching practice and also at the end of term have the students submit a written anonymous evaluation of my abilities to teach the course. I now question if there are other formative types of evaluation which would be valuable to employ in my practice.

Reference

Fitzpatrick, J., Sanders, J.R. & Worthen, B.R. (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. (3rd.ed. pp.1-53). New York: Pearson Education.